

**U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
White River Field Office
73544 Hwy 64
Meeker, CO 81641**

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

NUMBER: CO-110-2006-145-EA

CASEFILE/PROJECT NUMBER (optional): COC61921

PROJECT NAME: 138-kV Power Line Extension at Yankee Gulch Substation

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: Sixth Principal Meridian, Colorado
T. 1 S., R. 97 W.,
Sec. 19, NE¼.

APPLICANT: White River Electric Association, Inc. (WREA)

ISSUES AND CONCERNS (optional): None

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES:

Proposed Action: WREA proposes to construct two parallel 138 kV transmission powerlines from the existing Yankee Gulch Substation to Enterprise Product's substation site. One line is scheduled for immediate construction; the other line will be constructed when the demand arises. The reason for the parallel 138 kV power lines will be to increase the reliability of electrical service. The parallel 138 kV lines will be 2,543 feet in length and due to the parallel lines, a 200 foot right-of-way is needed.

In order to facilitate Enterprise Product's needs, WREA will have to reconfigure the bus work, protective breakers and expand the equipment within the Yankee Gulch Substation which would require an increase in the physical size of the substation site. WREA proposes to extend the boundary of their substation to the south an additional 30 feet and to the east an additional 100 feet.

As a part of reconfiguring the Yankee Gulch Substation, WREA will require one span of overhead 138 kV power line to extend 306 feet to the south of the Yankee Gulch Substation, as the required bus work and exit point, for the Enterprise lines will restrict their future access to the 138 kV bus work inside the substation, and will result in a serious safety issue for future modifications and needs from the substation.

WREA estimate the 138 kV power line to the Enterprise site will require 5 structures, for each line and one structure placed 306 feet south of the substation. Equipment to be used will be a 2 Ton + digger/derrick trucks, 2 Ton + bucket truck, backhoe, conductor stringing equipment, and basic utility trucks. The job is anticipated to take approximately 45 working days to complete.

Since wooden poles are going to be used, a 100-foot clear-cut area around each of the structures is requested for fire protection. Some tree cutting and thinning will be required for stringing of conductors, and the thick or tall trees that may pose a problem, in case if wild land fire, will be cut and/or thinned.

All poles will be electrically safe for raptors.

No Action Alternative: Under the no action alternative, the application would be denied and the conditions would remain as they are now.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT NOT CARRIED FORWARD: None

NEED FOR THE ACTION: The new gas plant that is being built by Enterprise is in need of more power to operate the facility. In addition, due to increased consumer usage and the size of the Enterprise facility, more power is required to operate the compressor station.

PLAN CONFORMANCE REVIEW: The Proposed Action is subject to and has been reviewed for conformance with the following plan (43 CFR 1610.5, BLM 1617.3):

Name of Plan: White River Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan (ROD/RMP).

Date Approved: July 1, 1997

Decision Number/Page: Page 2-49 thru 2-52

Decision Language: “To make public lands available for the siting of public and private facilities through the issuance of applicable land use authorizations, in a manner that provides for reasonable protection of other resource values”.

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT / ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES / MITIGATION MEASURES:

STANDARDS FOR PUBLIC LAND HEALTH: In January 1997, Colorado Bureau of Land Management (BLM) approved the Standards for Public Land Health. These standards cover

upland soils, riparian systems, plant and animal communities, threatened and endangered species, and water quality. Standards describe conditions needed to sustain public land health and relate to all uses of the public lands. Because a standard exists for these five categories, a finding must be made for each of them in an environmental analysis. These findings are located in specific elements listed below:

CRITICAL ELEMENTS

AIR QUALITY

Affected Environment: The entire White River Resource area has been classified as either attainment or unclassified for all pollutants, and most of the area has been designated prevention of significant deterioration (PSD) class II. The proposed action is not located within a ten mile radius of any special designation air sheds or non-attainment areas. The air quality criteria pollutant likely to be most affected by the proposed actions is the level of inhalable particulate matter, specifically particles ten microns or less in diameter (PM₁₀) associated with fugitive dust. In addition, slight increases in the following criteria pollutants: carbon monoxide, ozone (secondary pollutant), nitrogen dioxide, and sulfur dioxide may also occur during construction due to the combustion of fossil fuels associated with construction operations. Unfortunately, no monitoring data is available for the survey area. However, it is apparent that current air quality near the proposed location is good because only one location on the western slope (Grand Junction, CO) is monitoring for criteria pollutants other than PM₁₀. Furthermore, the Colorado Air Pollution Control Division (APCD) estimates the maximum PM₁₀ levels (24-hour average) in rural portions of western Colorado like the Piceance Basin to be near 50 micrograms per cubic meter (µg/m³). This estimate is well below the National Ambient Air Quality Standard (NAAQS) for PM₁₀ (24-hour average) of 150 µg/m³.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Surface disturbance will be minimal and adverse impacts to air quality are not expected.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: None

Mitigation: Re-vegetate disturbed areas with a BLM native seed mixture #3. Construction equipment will be maintained in good operating condition to ensure that engines are running efficiently. Vehicles and construction equipment with emission controls will also be maintained to ensure effective pollutant emission reductions.

CULTURAL RESOURCES

Affected Environment: A Class III pedestrian survey has been completed along this corridor. No cultural resources have been found or recorded.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: There will be no consequences for Cultural Resources resulting from this action.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: None.

Mitigation: The following mitigation measures will be followed during construction, operation, and maintenance of the project:

- All persons in the area who are associated with this project must be informed that if anyone is found disturbing historic, archaeological, or scientific resources, including collecting artifacts, the person or persons will be subject to prosecution.
- The BLM authorized officer must be notified, by telephone, with written confirmation, immediately upon the discovery of human remains, funerary items, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony. Activities must stop in the vicinity of the discovery and the discovery must be protected for 30 days or until notified to proceed by the authorized officer.
- If in connection with operations under this contract the project proponent, his contractors, subcontractors, or the employees of any of them, discovers, encounters or becomes aware of any objects or sites of cultural or paleontological value or scientific interest such as historic or prehistoric ruins, graves or grave markers, fossils, or artifacts, the proponent shall immediately suspend all operations in the vicinity of the cultural or paleontological resource and shall notify the BLM authorized officer of the findings. Operations may resume at the discovery site upon receipt of written instructions and authorization by the authorized officer.

INVASIVE, NON-NATIVE SPECIES

Affected Environment: The invasive alien annual cheatgrass occurs throughout the project area in association with unvegetated earthen disturbance along roads, wells, and pipelines. Noxious weeds known to occur in the project area include mullein and bull thistle.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The proposed action will create about 1.5 acres of soil/vegetation disturbance which if it is not effectively revegetated will provide safe sites for the establishment and proliferation of noxious weeds and cheatgrass.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There will be no change from the present situation

Mitigation: The operator will be required to monitor the project area for a minimum of five years post disturbance and eradicate all noxious and invasive species which occur on site using materials and methods approved in advance by the Authorized Officer.

MIGRATORY BIRDS

Affected Environment: The proposed powerline is located adjacent to a highly industrialized area (e.g., ~50 ac gas facility). Few migratory birds assume breeding functions at

this localized site due mainly to the high intensity of gas development within the area. Under the further influence of heavy and persistent disturbance, it is unlikely that this project site would host any avian nesting activity.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Due the degraded vegetation conditions and industrialized nature of the site, there is little likelihood that this project would interfere with any avian breeding attempts, regardless of project timeframes.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: The site would remain degraded and heavily influenced by human and vehicular activity. There would continue to be little, if any, likelihood of migratory birds selecting this project vicinity for nesting attempts.

Mitigation: None

THREATENED, ENDANGERED, AND SENSITIVE ANIMAL SPECIES (includes a finding on Standard 4)

Affected Environment: There are no threatened, endangered or BLM-sensitive animal species that are known to inhabit or derive important use from the project area.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The proposed action would have no conceivable influence on special status animals or associated habitat.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: The no action alternative would have no conceivable influence on special status animals or associated habitat.

Mitigation: None

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for Threatened & Endangered species: The proposed and no-action alternatives would have no influence on populations or habitats of animals associated with the Endangered Species Act or BLM sensitive species and, as such, would have no influence on the status of applicable land health standards.

WASTES, HAZARDOUS OR SOLID

Affected Environment: There are no known hazardous or other solid wastes on the subject lands. No hazardous materials are known to have been used, stored or disposed of at sites included in the project area.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: No listed or extremely hazardous materials in excess of threshold quantities are proposed for use in this project. While commercial preparations of fuels and lubricants proposed for use may contain some hazardous constituents, they would be stored, used and transported in a manner consistent with applicable laws, and the

generation of hazardous wastes would not be anticipated. Solid wastes would be properly disposed of.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: No hazardous or other solid wastes would be generated under the no-action alternative.

Mitigation: The applicant shall be required to collect and properly dispose of any solid waste generated by the proposed actions.

WATER QUALITY, SURFACE AND GROUND (includes a finding on Standard 5)

Affected Environment: Surface Water: The proposed power line route is located entirely within the Yellow Creek catchment areas. Yellow Creek is a perennial tributary to the White River (stream segment 13b of the White River Basin). The White River is a tributary to the Green River which flows into the Colorado River.

The “Status of Water Quality in Colorado –2006” (CDPHE 2006b) and Regulation No. 37 Classifications and Numeric Standards for Lower Colorado River Basin (CDPHE 2004a) were reviewed for information relating to drainages within the project area. Stream segment 13b of the White River Basin is defined as the mainstem of Yellow Creek including all tributaries, from the source to the confluence with the White River. The State has classified stream segment 13b of the White River Basin as “Use Protected” and further designated as beneficial for the following uses: Warm Aquatic Life 2, Recreation 2, and Agriculture. The antidegradation review requirements in the Antidegradation Rule are not applicable to waters designated use-protected. For those waters, only the protection specified in each reach will apply. For this reach, minimum standards for three parameters have been listed. These parameters are: dissolved oxygen = 5.0 milligrams per liter (mg/l), pH = 6.5 - 9.0, and Fecal Coliform = 2,000/100 milliliters (ml) and 630/100 ml E. coli. Numeric standards for inorganic compounds and metals can be found within Regulation No. 37 Classifications and Numeric Standards for Lower Colorado River Basin (CDPHE 2004a).

Newly promulgated Colorado Regulations Nos. 93 and 94 (CDPHE 2006c and 2006d, respectively) were reviewed for information related to the proposed project area drainages. Regulation No. 93 is the State’s Section 303(d) list of water-quality-limited segments requiring Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs). The 2006 303(d) list of segments needing development of TMDLs includes two segments within the White River - segment 9b, White River tributaries North and South Forks to Piceance Creek, specifically the Flag Creek portion (for impairment from selenium with a low priority for TMDL development) and segment 22, tributaries to the White River, Douglas Creek to the Colorado/Utah boarder, specifically West Evacuation Wash, and Douglas Creek (sediment impairments). Regulation 94 is the State’s list of water bodies identified for monitoring and evaluation, to assess water quality and determine if a need for TMDLs exists. The list includes two White River segments that are potentially impaired – 9 and 22. Segment 13b was not listed.

Ground Water: Local ground water aquifers (alluvial and perched) along Yellow Creek and its tributaries may be affected by the proposed actions. Deeper ground water resources in bedrock aquifers are not anticipated to be directly affected by the proposed action.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Construction of the proposed power lines during wet periods or failure to restrict public access along the ROW may result in rut development along the access route which would alter natural drainage patterns affecting the recharge of local surface and ground water. In addition, rut development would likely accelerate erosion along the ROW potentially deteriorating water quality in downstream portions of the Yellow Creek watershed. Failure to successfully re-vegetate disturbed surfaces with preferred species may result in increased erosive potential and elevate sediment/salt loads to Yellow Creek, the White River and eventually the Colorado River.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: None

Mitigation: Mitigate potential impacts to water resources by restricting non emergency maintenance activities on power lines when soils become saturated to a depth of three inches or more. In addition, unauthorized motorized travel (public) must be restricted from utilizing the ROW.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for water quality: Stream segment 13b of the White River Basin currently meet water quality standards set by the state. Many of the upper tributaries which are ephemeral and flow in direct response to storm events do not meet the standards during periods of flow. Following suggested mitigation measures, water quality in the affected stream segment should continue to meet standards.

WETLANDS AND RIPARIAN ZONES (includes a finding on Standard 2)

Affected Environment: There are no wetlands or riparian zones potentially influenced by the proposed or no-action alternatives.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The proposed action would have no influence on wetland or riparian areas.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: The no-action alternative would have no influence wetland or riparian areas.

Mitigation: None

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for riparian systems: The proposed action and no action alternatives would have no conceivable influence on the condition or function of riparian areas or associated habitats and therefore would have no influence on continued maintenance of associated land health standards.

WILDERNESS

Affected Environment: There are no designated wilderness areas, or wilderness study areas in the vicinity of this project. The area supports oil and gas related activities and developments, as well developments related to sodium mining.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: None

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: None

Mitigation: None

CRITICAL ELEMENTS NOT PRESENT OR NOT AFFECTED:

No ACEC's, flood plains, prime and unique farmlands, or Wild and Scenic Rivers, threatened, endangered or sensitive plants exist within the area affected by the proposed action. For threatened, endangered and sensitive plant species Public Land Health Standard is not applicable since neither the proposed nor the no-action alternative would have any influence on populations of, or habitats potentially occupied by, special status plants. There are also no Native American religious or environmental justice concerns associated with the proposed action.

NON-CRITICAL ELEMENTS

The following elements **must** be addressed due to the involvement of Standards for Public Land Health:

SOILS (includes a finding on Standard 1)

Affected Environment: The following data is a product of an order III soil survey conducted by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Rio Blanco County, CO. Table 1 highlights important soil characteristics. A complete summary of this information can be found at the White River Field Office. No “fragile soils” have been mapped near the project area.

Table 1:

| Soil Number | Soil Name | Slope | Ecological site | Salinity (mmhos/cm) | Run Off | Erosion Potential | Bedrock |
|-------------|------------|-------|-----------------|---------------------|---------|--------------------|---------|
| 104 | Yamac Loam | 2-15% | Rolling Loam | <2 | Medium | Slight to moderate | >60 |

No CSU-1 “fragile or saline soils” have been mapped along the proposed power line ROW.

104-Yamac loam (2 to 15 percent slopes) is a deep, well drained soil found on rolling uplands, terraces, and fans. It formed in eolian and alluvial material. The native vegetation is mainly low shrubs and grasses. Elevation is 5,800 to 7,100 feet. The average annual precipitation is 13 to

16 inches, the average annual air temperature is 40 to 45 degrees F, and the average frost-free period is 80 to 105 days. Typically, the surface layer is brown loam 4 inches thick. The upper 8 inches of the subsoil is brown loam, and the lower 10 inches is highly calcareous loam. The upper 26 inches of the substratum is very pale brown loam, and the lower part to a depth of 60 inches or more is pale brown loam. Permeability of this Yamac soil is moderate. Available water capacity is moderate to high. Effective rooting depth is 60 inches or more. Runoff is medium, and the hazard of water erosion is slight to moderate. Maintaining crop residue on or near the surface reduces runoff, reduces soil blowing, and helps to maintain soil tilth and organic matter content, to conserve moisture, and to reduce erosion. Erosion also is reduced if fall grain is seeded early, stubble-mulch tillage is used, and tillage and seeding are on the contour or across the slope. Also, waterways should be shaped and seeded to perennial grass.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Construction activities will result in soil compaction reducing infiltration rates and increasing erosive potential from existing conditions. The lower 10 inches of the Yamac loam is identified as being highly calcareous. Improper drainage along the ROW may result in the dissolution of calcium carbonate causing soil piping and gully formation. In addition, any leaks or spills of environmentally unfriendly substances from construction equipment may contaminate soils reducing productivity hindering revegetation efforts essential for stabilizing soils. Furthermore, surface disturbing activities may promote establishment of noxious and invasive plant species lacking appropriate rooting structures to stabilize soils.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: None

Mitigation: Utility truck traffic should be kept to a minimum to reduce the potential impacts of soil compaction. To further mitigate resource damage, timing of construction operations should be planned to avoid wet periods when soils are saturated (e.g. during spring thaw, after late summer monsoons). Restrict motorized vehicle access along ROW to only authorized personal constructing/maintaining power lines. .

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for upland soils: At the present time, soils in the vicinity of the proposed action exhibit infiltration and permeability rates that are appropriate to soil type, landform, climate, and geologic processes. Following power-line construction, soils will continue to meet standards.

VEGETATION (includes a finding on Standard 3)

Affected Environment: Vegetation in the project area is a mixture of Wyoming big sagebrush and young juniper invading this, a primarily a rolling loam range site.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The proposed action will create about 1.5 acres of soil/vegetation disturbance which if it is not effectively revegetated will provide safe sites for the establishment and proliferation of noxious weeds and cheatgrass. Noxious weeds could also spread from the project sites to surrounding native rangelands resulting in a long term negative impact.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There will no change from the present situation.

Mitigation: Promptly revegetate all disturbed areas with Native Seed mix #3. Revegetation will commence immediately after construction and will not be delayed until the following fall. Seed mixture rates are Pure Live Seed (PLS) pounds per acre. Drill seeding is the preferred method of application.

| Native Seed Mix # 3 | | |
|---------------------------------|--------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Plant Species | PLS/Lb | Ecological Site |
| Western wheatgrass (Rosana) | 2 | Gravelly 10"-14", Pinyon/Juniper Woodland, Stony Foothills, 147 (Mountain Mahogany) |
| Bluebunch wheatgrass (Whitmar) | 2 | |
| Needle and thread | 1 | |
| Indian ricegrass (Rimrock) | 2 | |
| Fourwing saltbush (Wytana) | 1 | |
| Utah sweetvetch | 1 | |

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for plant and animal communities (partial, see also Wildlife, Aquatic and Wildlife, Terrestrial: Vegetation in the project area currently meets the Standard on a watershed and landscape basis and is expected to continue to meet the Standard in the future following implementation of the proposed action.

WILDLIFE, AQUATIC (includes a finding on Standard 3)

Affected Environment: There are no aquatic habitats potentially influenced by the proposed or no-action alternatives.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The proposed action would have no influence on aquatic wildlife or associated habitat.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: The no action alternative would have no influence on aquatic wildlife or associated habitat.

Mitigation: None

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for plant and animal communities (partial, see also Vegetation and Wildlife, Terrestrial): The proposed action and no action alternatives would have no conceivable influence on the condition or function of aquatic wildlife or associated habitats and therefore would have no influence on continued maintenance of associated land health standards.

WILDLIFE, TERRESTRIAL (includes a finding on Standard 3)

Affected Environment: The proposed powerline is located adjacent to a highly industrialized area (e.g., ~50 ac gas facility). This area is categorized by the Colorado Division of Wildlife as severe winter range - a specialized component of winter range that periodically supports virtually all an area's deer under the most severe winter conditions (i.e., extreme cold and heavy snowpack). These ranges typically sustain big game use from December through April.

Nongame mammals and birds using this area are typical and widely distributed in extensive like habitats across the Resource Area and northwest Colorado; there are no narrowly endemic or highly specialized species known to inhabit those lands potentially influenced by this action.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Due the degraded vegetation conditions and industrialized nature of the site, this project would have no substantive influence on the availability or utility of habitats for resident wildlife populations, regardless of timeframe.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: The site would remain degraded and heavily influenced by human and vehicular activity.

Mitigation: None

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for plant and animal communities (partial, see also Vegetation and Wildlife, Aquatic): This proposed powerline would have no substantive influence on the status of public land health. This degraded site is largely dedicated to industrial uses.

OTHER NON-CRITICAL ELEMENTS: For the following elements, only those brought forward for analysis will be addressed further.

| Non-Critical Element | NA or Not Present | Applicable or Present, No Impact | Applicable & Present and Brought Forward for Analysis |
|---------------------------|-------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| Access and Transportation | | X | |
| Cadastral Survey | X | | |
| Fire Management | | | X |
| Forest Management | X | | |
| Geology and Minerals | | X | |
| Hydrology/Water Rights | X | | |
| Law Enforcement | | X | |
| Noise | X | | |
| Paleontology | | X | |
| Rangeland Management | | X | |
| Realty Authorizations | | X | |
| Recreation | | X | |
| Socio-Economics | | X | |
| Visual Resources | | | X |

| Non-Critical Element | NA or Not Present | Applicable or Present, No Impact | Applicable & Present and Brought Forward for Analysis |
|----------------------|-------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| Wild Horses | X | | |

ACCESS AND TRANSPORTATION

Affected Environment: The proposed action takes place along Rio Blanco County Road 83 near the former American Soda Plant. This road may receive heavy use during hunting season.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: While some short term disruption to travelers could occur during construction, the presence of the power line would not effect or alter current uses of the road. There would be no reduction or improvement to the access picture in the area.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: None

Mitigation: None

FIRE MANAGEMENT

Affected Environment: The proposed action falls within the B6 Yellow Creek fire management polygon and is an area where wildland fire is not desired due to cultural resources and industrial infrastructure and suppression if the desired management response. The proposed action is primarily situated within the Wyoming sagebrush/grass fuel type with approximately 90 meters of the project traversing a sparse pinion-juniper stand in section 33 NESE. Sagebrush fuel type has a total fuel loading of approximately 2.5 tons/acre and the PJ fuel type has a fuel loading of approximately 9 tons/acre.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The project will add incrementally to the ever growing amount of industrial infrastructure which could be threatened by wildfire within the B6 fire management polygon. Electrical powerlines are a high priority for protection from damage by wildfire for county and federal governments due to the economical impact should these facilities be lost in the event of a wildfire. Powerlines are also amongst the most problematic infrastructure to defend due to their structural ignitability and the hazards to firefighters associated with smoke being a conductor of electrical current.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: None

Mitigation: A brush beater should be used to clear the sagebrush away from wooden power poles to a maximum distance of one hundred feet to provide defensible space for firefighters in the event of a wildfire. The cutting blade should not be lower than 6 inches from the ground as measured from a flat surface to avoid surface disturbance which would create a suitable environment for cheatgrass establishment, which would cause a greater fuels hazard due

to the flashy continuous loading nature of cheatgrass. Conversely, all soil disturbances created by construction and vegetation clearing should be reseeded as stipulated in the vegetation section.

VISUAL RESOURCES

Affected Environment: The proposed action would be located in an area with a VRM III classification. The objective of this class is to partially retain the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape should be moderate. Management activities may attract attention but should not dominate the view of the casual observer. Changes should repeat the basic elements found in the predominant natural features of the characteristic landscape.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The proposed action would be located near an existing sub station, American Soda processing plant, and a gas treatment plant under construction. The purpose of the proposed action is to tie in with the aforementioned facilities and the additional disturbance associated with the proposed action would not dominate the view of a casual observer. A casual observer would not be able to view the proposed action from RBC 5 (Piceance Creek Road) which is a paved route that is the major transportation route in the area. The level of change to the characteristic landscape would be less than moderate, and the objectives of the VRM III classification would be retained.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There would be no environmental impacts.

Mitigation: None

CUMULATIVE IMPACTS SUMMARY: This action is consistent with the scope of impacts addressed in the White River ROD/RMP. The cumulative impacts of energy related development are addressed in the White River ROD/RMP for each resource value that would be affected by the proposed action.

REFERENCES CITED:

Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) Water Quality Control Commission (WQCC), 2005a. Regulation No. 37 Classifications and Numeric Standards for Lower Colorado River Basin. Amended December 12, 2005 and Effective March 2, 2006.

CDPHE-WQCC, 2006b. "Status of Water Quality in Colorado – 2006, The Update to the 2002 and 2004 305(b) Report," April 2006.

CDPHE-WQCC, 2006c. "Regulation No. 93, 2006 Section 303(d) List Water-Quality-Limited Segments Requiring TMDLs," effective April 30.

CDPHE-WQCC, 2006d. “Regulation No. 94, Colorado’s Monitoring and Evaluation List,” effective April 30.

PERSONS / AGENCIES CONSULTED: None

INTERDISCIPLINARY REVIEW:

| Name | Title | Area of Responsibility |
|--------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| Nate Dieterich | Hydrologist | Air Quality |
| Tamara Meagley | Natural Resource Specialist | Areas of Critical Environmental Concern |
| Tamara Meagley | Natural Resource Specialist | Threatened and Endangered Plant Species |
| Gabrielle Elliott | Archeologist | Cultural Resources Paleontological Resources |
| Mark Hafkenschiel | Rangeland Management Specialist | Invasive, Non-Native Species |
| Lisa Belmonte | Wildlife Biologist | Migratory Birds |
| Lisa Belmonte | Wildlife Biologist | Threatened, Endangered and Sensitive Animal Species, Wildlife |
| Melissa J. Kindall | Hazmat Collateral; Range Technician | Wastes, Hazardous or Solid; Wild Horses |
| Nate Dieterich | Hydrologist | Water Quality, Surface and Ground Hydrology and Water Rights |
| Lisa Belmonte | Wildlife Biologist | Wetlands and Riparian Zones |
| Vern Rholl | Supervisory NRS | Wilderness |
| Nate Dieterich | Hydrologist | Soils |
| Mark Hafkenschiel | Rangeland Management Specialist | Vegetation |
| Lisa Belmonte | Wildlife Biologist | Wildlife Terrestrial and Aquatic |
| Vern Rholl | Supervisory NRS | Access and Transportation |
| Penny Brown | Natural Resource Specialist | Fire Management |
| Robert Fowler | Forester | Forest Management |
| Paul Daggett | Mining Engineer | Geology and Minerals |
| Mark Hafkenschiel | Rangeland Management Specialist | Rangeland Management |
| Penny Brown | Realty Specialist | Realty Authorizations |
| Chris Ham | Outdoor Recreation Planner | Recreation |
| Keith Whitaker | Natural Resource Specialist | Visual Resources |

Finding of No Significant Impact/Decision Record (FONSI/DR)

CO-110-2006-145-EA

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)/RATIONALE: The environmental assessment and analyzing the environmental effects of the proposed action have been reviewed. The approved mitigation measures (listed below) result in a Finding of No Significant Impact on the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not necessary to further analyze the environmental effects of the proposed action.

DECISION/RATIONALE: It is my decision to approve the proposed action with the following mitigation measures.

MITIGATION MEASURES:

1. Construction equipment will be maintained in good operating condition to ensure that engines are running efficiently. Vehicles and construction equipment with emission controls will also be maintained to ensure effective pollutant emission reductions.
2. The following mitigation measures will be followed during construction, operation, and maintenance of the project:
 - All persons in the area who are associated with this project must be informed that if anyone is found disturbing historic, archaeological, or scientific resources, including collecting artifacts, the person or persons will be subject to prosecution.
 - The BLM authorized officer must be notified, by telephone, with written confirmation, immediately upon the discovery of human remains, funerary items, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony. Activities must stop in the vicinity of the discovery and the discovery must be protected for 30 days or until notified to proceed by the authorized officer.
 - If in connection with operations under this contract the project proponent, his contractors, subcontractors, or the employees of any of them, discovers, encounters or becomes aware of any objects or sites of cultural or paleontological value or scientific interest such as historic or prehistoric ruins, graves or grave markers, fossils, or artifacts, the proponent shall immediately suspend all operations in the vicinity of the cultural or paleontological resource and shall notify the BLM authorized officer of the findings. Operations may resume at the discovery site upon receipt of written instructions and authorization by the authorized officer.

3. The operator will be required to monitor the project area for a minimum of five years post disturbance and eradicate all noxious and invasive species which occur on site using materials and methods approved in advance by the Authorized Officer.

4. Promptly revegetate all disturbed areas with Native Seed mix #3. Revegetation will commence immediately after construction and will not be delayed until the following fall. Seed mixture rates are Pure Live Seed (PLS) pounds per acre. Drill seeding is the preferred method of application.

| Native Seed Mix # 3 | | |
|---------------------------------|--------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Plant Species | PLS/Lb | Ecological Site |
| Western wheatgrass (Rosana) | 2 | Gravelly 10"-14", Pinyon/Juniper Woodland, Stony Foothills, 147 (Mountain Mahogany) |
| Bluebunch wheatgrass (Whitmar) | 2 | |
| Needle and thread | 1 | |
| Indian ricegrass (Rimrock) | 2 | |
| Fourwing saltbush (Wytana) | 1 | |
| Utah sweetvetch | 1 | |

5. The application shall be required to collect and properly dispose of any solid waste generated by the proposed action.

6. Mitigate potential impacts to water resources by restricting non-emergency maintenance activities on power lines when soils become saturated to a depth of three inches or more. In addition, unauthorized motorized travel (public) must be restricted from utilizing the ROW.

7. Utility truck traffic should be kept to a minimum to reduce the potential impacts of soil compaction. To further mitigate resource damage, timing of construction operations should be planned to avoid wet periods when soils are saturated (e.g. during spring thaw, after late summer monsoons). Restrict motorized vehicle access along ROW to only authorized personal constructing/maintaining power lines.

8. A brush beater should be used to clear the sagebrush away from wooden power poles to a maximum distance of one hundred feet to provide defensible space for firefighters in the event of a wildfire. The cutting blade should not be lower than 6 inches from the ground as measured from a flat surface to avoid surface disturbance which would create a suitable environment for cheatgrass establishment, which would cause a greater fuels hazard due to the flashy continuous loading nature of cheatgrass. Conversely, all soil disturbances created by construction and vegetation clearing should be reseeded as stipulated in the vegetation section.

COMPLIANCE/MONITORING: Compliance will be conducted by the realty staff every five years.

NAME OF PREPARER: Penny Brown

NAME OF ENVIRONMENTAL COORDINATOR: Caroline Hollowed

SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL:



Field Manager

DATE SIGNED: 7/28/06

ATTACHMENTS: General Location Map of the Proposed Action

Location Map of the Proposed Action CO-110-2006-145-EA

